of Food Adulteration Act and is fit for human consumption.

(c) and (d) Yes Sir. The CBI has registered a Preliminary Enquiry into specific acts of misconduct on the part of any official/organisation.

Storage facility for imported wheat

1435. DR. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether storage facilities were considered before deciding to import wheat from Australia;

(b) if so, why wheat is lying on ports; and

(c) the reasons for import despite adequate wheat stock in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No imported wheat is lying at the ports.

(c) Due to untimely rains during the sowing season, the Ministry of Agriculture had initially estimated that the production of wheat during 1997-98 Rabi Season was likely to be 64.51 million tonnes as against the production of 69.27 million tonnes during the previous year. Government had therefore, decided to import upto 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during 1998-99, of which the STC finalised contracts for import of 15 lakh tonnes (±5%) of wheat from Australia. A total of 14.15 lakh tonnes of wheat has arrived in India against the above contract.

Bridging the gap between domestic demand and supply of Potato, Pulses' and Oilseeds

1436. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the volume of annual average domestic demand for potato, pulses and oilseeds and that of domestic production for last five years including the current one; and

(b) how Government have been meeting the demand-supply gap, if any these years and how Government propose to bridge the gap this year as well?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) The year-wise precise estimates of demand in respect of potatoes, oilseeds and pulses are not available. However, as per the tentative estimates, the gap between the demand and supply of edible oils is around 13 lakh tonnes and those of pulses is over 20 lakh tonnes per annum.

(b) Government has put the import of edible oils and pulses under Open General Licence (OGL). The import duty on pulses has been abolished and in respect of edible oils the duty has been reduced from 25% to 15%. Import of selected edible oilseeds has been allowed. Besides, the production of edible oilseeds has increased in the country during the last few years and efforts are being made to step up the production of pulses and potatoes.

Prime Minister's Statement on price-hike

1437. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has in a public statement, announced recently that the unprecedented price hike of food-items, particularly those of vegetables, is due to natural ('Asmani') factors;

(b) if so, whether it is in variance with the assessment placed by the Cabinet Secretary in a recently held meeting with the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments; and